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Tafoya Associate Suspect Terrorist Connection Denied

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A former soldier identified as an intermediary of accused hitman Eugene Tafoya is suspected of being one of a handful of ex-Green Berets recruited to train terrorists in Libya, a law enforcement source told The Denver Post Wednesday.

James Clinton Dean, a retired Army Special Forces noncommissioned officer from Fayetteville, N.C., has made several trips to Libya and other countries in the Middle-East or on the African continent, the source said.

The FBI is investigating Dean and other former Green Berets who also worked in Libya to determine the extent of their activities and whether any criminal charges are warranted, the source said.

Dean denies any such involvement, and his assertion is supported by Luke F. Thompson, a retired Special Forces master sergeant now living in Honolulu who recruited the first group of Green Berets to go to Libya.

"He wasn't with me," Thompson said during a telephone interview. "I recruited the original people and took them there ... I don't know of his direct involvement in Libya, but there might be some involvement in related areas."

When asked what he meant by "related areas," Thompson declined to elaborate.

At least six Special Forces veterans trained in techniques of guerrilla warfare and five ex-Army explosives demolition specialists were recruited to provide terrorist training and explosives expertise in Libya in an operation organized by two ex-agents for the Central Intelligence Agency, according to previous reports of federal investigations.

Edwin P. Wilson and Francis J. Terpil, the ex-CIA agents, were indicted by a federal grand jury in Washington last year. They were accused of conspiracy to commit murder and of the illegal shipment of explosives and munitions to Libya.

In an unrelated case, Tafoya is on trial in Fort Collins on a charge of attempted first-degree murder and conspiracy in the October 1980 shooting of Faisal Zagallai, a Libyan student at Colorado State University who was opposed to the regime of Libyan dictator Moammar Khadafy.

In connection with that trial, authorities have disclosed that Dean is the mystery intermediary for Tafoya who appeared on a transcript of a tape-recorded conversation with Tafoya discussing "assignments" and a car bombing in Canada.

In an affidavit signed by Loren B. Schall, assistant Larimer County district attorney, Dean is identified as the mysterious "Jim" on a tape recording seized from Tafoya's car last April.

Dean also was described in the affidavit as a "necessary and material witness" in the Tafoya case. Attached to the affidavit was a copy of a subpoena for Dean directing that he appear in Fort Collins on Nov. 18 and remain for three days.

Thompson said he received a similar subpoena from Fort Collins authorities on Tuesday instructing that he report as a material witness on behalf of the prosecution on Nov. 23.

Thompson said he does not know whether he will honor the subpoena. He said he was leaving for Washington Wednesday night and would confer about it with Justice Department officials. And he added:

"It's for the prosecution and I think they're shooting the wrong ball of wax. The only thing I could relate would help him (Tafoya)."

... known Tafoya since both served together in the Army. But he denied working in Libya and disclaimed knowledge of the tape-recorded transcript, which authorities released two weeks ago.

According to a knowledgeable law enforcement source, however, Dean was one of the hand-picked ex-Green Berets who worked for Wilson and Terpil in Tripoli, where, under the express direction of Abdul Senussi, chief of Libyan intelligence, they organized a terrorist training program for Libyan commandos.

"We know that they met with the minister of intelligence there and they were training guerrillas in this type of warfare — demolitions, guerrilla warfare, escape and evasion and things like that," the law enforcement investigator said.

Most of those Special Forces veterans reportedly stayed in Libya at least through 1978.

Wilson was quoted in an ABC News broadcast of an interview conducted in Tripoli last August as terming the report he recruited the Green Berets to train terrorists as an "absolute lie," although he conceded that four ex-Green Berets he hired were still in Libya at the time of the interview.

The law enforcement source familiar with federal investigations of Wilson and Terpil said the FBI is investigating Dean and the other former soldiers because of their involvement in the Libyan operation.

"Basically what they're trying to do is to find out how much is involved and whether any other charges (besides those against Wilson and Terpil) can be brought against that group," the source said.

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